

JOHN B. SECRIST, JR. PAPER COLLECTION

5.75 linear feet
18 boxes
(1919-1973, n.d.)
(bulk dates: 1949-1958)

- Series I: Correspondence (1949 Dec. 3-1958 Sept. 9, n.d.)
- Series II: Discographic Materials and Collection Notes (ca. 1941-1958, n.d.)
- Series III: Photographs (1919-1932, n.d.)
- Series IV: Scrapbooks (ca. 1955-1973)
- Series V: Record Label Photographs

Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division
Library of Congress

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Biography/History Note

Record collector and mathematician John Bert Secrist, Jr. was born in Kansas City, Kansas on August 14, 1918 to Florence and John B. Secrist. Secrist received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mathematics (Phi Beta Kappa) from the University of Richmond in 1939 and a Master of Arts in Mathematics from the University of Virginia in 1941. He taught math for several years at the United States Naval Academy, Emory University, and Columbia University where he continued his graduate course work.

In 1953 he joined the staff of IBM in New York, working as a mathematician. His projects included computer technology, satellite communications and missile defense.

Secrist began acquiring records as a high school student, and continued to have an interest in collecting vocal recordings throughout his college career. After moving to New York in 1945 and meeting others who shared his interests, he became a more avid collector, and was a founder and member of the Vocal Record Collectors' Society, a non-profit organization for those interested in collecting classical vocal recordings of all eras.

Secrist collected early record catalogs and began compiling more detailed discographies for his favorite artists. The first, of Rosa Ponselle, was published in the 1950 issue of *The Record Collector*. While compiling the Ponselle discography, Secrist was granted an interview with Miss Ponselle, and became a friend for many years. In 1951 he published a discography of Enrico Caruso in the same journal and later published it in conjunction with Francis Robinson's *Caruso, his life in pictures*.

As a prominent record collector, Secrist he was known for his exacting standards. Although he kept much of his collection in his parent's home in Atlanta, a large portion was held in New York as well, especially items he kept for trade. Secrist was meticulous in his efforts to find not just a copy of particular recordings, but those as close to perfect as possible. Discographer Aida Favia-Artsay referred to his methods in the following way: "His was the selective, purposeful way: only classical vocal recordings, related material, and mainly *quality above quantity!*"

Secrist died in New York City at the age of 40 on October 11, 1958. In January of 1963, his parents transferred the majority of his collection (1700 opera recordings) to the Library of Congress.

Scope and Content

This collection of papers comprises a small part of the major collection of nearly 1700 operatic recordings acquired by John Secrist. Strengths of this collection include large runs of Enrico Caruso and Rosa Ponselle recordings; the collection is further distinguished by being in near-mint condition due to Secrist's exacting standards. The papers in this collection further explain and index the Secrist recordings, while discographic and photographic materials provide information on the artists whose work he collected.

Series Descriptions

Series I. Correspondence (Dec. 3, 1949 - Sept. 9, 1958), .1 linear feet

Series I consists of correspondence to John Secrist from collectors and performers. Materials are arranged alphabetically by last name of correspondent. An index to correspondence with dates and summaries is available in Folder 1. The most frequent subjects addressed include Secrist's discographies, requests for information on recordings and artists, and recordings or catalogs offered for sale or trade. Prominent or frequent correspondents include Rosa Ponselle, H.J. Drummond, Geraldine Farrar, Lloyd Garrison, and George Keating.

Series II. Discographic Materials and Collection Notes (ca. 1941-1958, n.d.),

.32 linear feet

Series II consists of notes on Secrist's record and catalog collections as well as discographies and other biographical information regarding opera singers such as Enrico Caruso, Rosa Ponselle, John McCormack and John Charles Thomas. A notebook containing an inventory of Secrist's collection arranged by artist is included here as are a variety of lists of recordings and catalogs. Also available in this series are various publications, many of which have been annotated by Secrist, including Julian Morton Moses's *Collectors' Guide to American Recordings, 1895-1925* (c1949). One folder of song and aria lyrics can also be found here.

Series III. Photographs of Rosa Ponselle (1919-1932, n.d.), .42 linear feet

Photographs of Rosa Ponselle are primarily publicity portraits for operas in which she performed. Secrist has labeled the verso of the majority of these photographs with the title of each opera as well as where and when the photograph was published, if known. These individual portraits of Rosa Ponselle in costume are arranged alphabetically by opera name. Two folders of group photographs are filed at the end of the series. Most of the photographs are later copy prints (probably dating from the 1950s), but some originals are included.

Series IV. Scrapbooks (ca. 1955-1973), .42 linear feet

This series consists of three leather-bound scrapbooks compiled by John Secrist's parents after his death. The scrapbooks include clippings, correspondence, photographs and other miscellaneous items relating to their son and his collection. Many of the letters and clippings concern the donation of the John Secrist collection to the Library of Congress and the resulting

publicity.

Series V. Record Label Photographs 4.25 linear feet

This series consists of over 3,000 b & w photographs of record labels displaying the title, composer, performers, record company and catalog number of each record in Secrist's collection. Matrix numbers for each recording are indicated also. The 4" x 6" photos are arranged in alphabetical order by the performer's last name. Record labels include Victor, Victrola, Columbia, Gramophone, Pathé, Brunswick, Odeon and HMV, among others.

Provenance

This collection was donated to the Library of Congress in 1963 by John B. and Florence Secrist in memory of their son, John Secrist.

Series I: Correspondence (Dec. 3, 1949 - Sept. 9, 1958)

Correspondence is arranged alphabetically by last name of correspondent. An index in Folder 1 includes dates and topics.

<u>Box (Call no.)</u>	<u>Folder</u>		<u>Date</u>
1 (RPA 00xxx)	1	Index to correspondence (by name, with date and summary)	n.d.
	2	Alda, F. - Drummond, H.J.	1949 Dec 3 - 1958 Aug
25			
	3	Farrar, G. - O'Harra, R.	1950 Feb 2 - 1958 Jul 14
	4	Park, B. - Zussman, H.	1950 Jun 24 - 1958 Sept
29			

Series II: Discographic Materials and Collection Notes (ca. 1941-1958, n.d.)

Materials in this series are arranged alphabetically by description.

<u>Box (Call no.)</u>	<u>Folder</u>		<u>Date</u>
[1 (RPA 00xxx)]	5	Caruso, Enrico - biography and record lists	ca. 1950
	6	<i>Caruso Discography</i> , by John Secrist [typescript and photocopy]	ca. 1951
	7	<i>Caruso Discography</i> by John Secrist [printers proofs with introductory page to <i>Caruso: his life in pictures</i> by Francis Robinson]	ca. 1957
	8	Catalog lists	ca. 1951-1958
	9-10	Collection inventory notebook, indexed by artist [with one set of photocopies of notebook]	ca. 1941-1958
	11	<i>The Finest Voices on Record</i> (from the Connoisseurs Record Club), Bulletins 1-3	ca. 1953-1958

12	<i>Collector's Guide to American Recordings 1895-1925</i> , by Julian Morton Moses, includes Secrist's hand-written collection notes	1949
13	McCormack, John - <i>John McCormack: the complete discography</i> , by L.F.X. McDermott Roe [signed by the author, includes Secrist's hand-written collection notes	1956
14	McCormack, John - recording lists	n.d.
15	Ponselle, Rosa	ca. 1953-1958
16	Song and aria lyrics, miscellaneous	n.d.
17	Thomas, John - recording list and notes	ca. 1948-1958
18	Miscellaneous and unidentified writings and recording lists	n.d.

Series III: Photographs of Rosa Ponselle (1919-1932, n.d.)

Individual portraits of Rosa Ponselle in costume are arranged alphabetically by opera name; group photographs are filed in two folders at the end of the series. The number in parentheses after each subject indicates the number of images available.

<u>Box (Call no.)</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Date</u>
2 (RPA 00xxx)	Ponselle, Rosa - publicity portraits from:	
19	L'Africaine (4) [3 are copies of 1922-3 originals]	ca. 1922, n.d.
20	L'Amore dei Tre Re (14) [most are copies of 1928-1930 originals]	1928, n.d.
21	Andrea Chénier (5) [copies of 1923-5 originals]	n.d.
22	Carmen (34) [copies of 1935-6 originals]	n.d.
23	Cavalleria Rusticana (7) [copies of 1934,	

	1937 originals]	n.d.
24	Don Carlos (8) [copies of 1921-4 originals]	n.d.
25	Ernani (9) [copies of 1921-ca. 1929 originals]	n.d.
26	La Forza del Destino (4) [most are copies of ca. 1927 originals]	1927, n.d.
27	Luisa Miller (3) [copies from 1929-30 originals]	n.d.
28	Oberon (3) [2 are copies of 1919-20 originals]	1919, n.d.
29	Le Roi d'Ys (3)	1922
30	La Traviata (10) [copies from 1930-1, and 1934 originals]	n.d.
31	Il Trovatore (4) [copies from ca. 1933 originals]	n.d.
32	La Vestale (10) [some are copies from 1925-6, and 1933]	1925-6, 1933
33	William Tell (Guillaume Tell) (11) [some are copies of 1923 originals]	1923, n.d.
34	Miscellaneous and unidentified (12) [most are copies from 1917-1927 originals]	1925, n.d.
35-36	Group photographs (57) [most are copies of 1925-1952 originals]	n.d.
37	Negatives (4)	n.d.

Series IV: Scrapbooks (ca. 1955-1973)

<u>Box (Call no.)</u>		<u>Date</u>
3 (RPA 000xxx)	Three scrapbooks [including clippings, photographs, correspondence, etc. relating to John Secrist and his collection, compiled by Florence and John B. Secrist, Sr.]	ca. 1955-1973

Series V: Record Label Photographs

Materials in this series are arranged alphabetically by performer's last name.

<u>Box (Call no.)</u>		<u>Date</u>
4	Abendroth, Irene - Caruso, Enrico	n.d.
5	Caruso, Enrico	n.d.
6	Caruso, Enrico - Chamlee, Mario	n.d.
7	Clemént, Edmond - Fabbri, Guerrina	n.d.
8	Farrar, Geraldine - Koshetz, Nina	n.d.
9	Kruszelnicka, Salomeja - McCormack, John	n.d.
10	McCormack, John	n.d.
11	McCormack, John - Muzio, Claudia	n.d.
12	Muzio, Claudia - Ponselle, Rosa	n.d.
13	Ponselle, Rosa - Ruffo, Titta	n.d.
14	Ruffo, Titta - Sembrich, Marcella	n.d.
15	Slezak, Leo - Tauber, Richard	n.d.
16	Tetrazzini, Luisa - Zenatello, Giovanni	n.d.
17	Duplicates	n.d.
18	Duplicates and Microfilm	n.d.

